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FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4598  
INFO RUEHZH/HAITI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 1283  
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY 1120  
RUEHQU/AMCONSUL QUEBEC PRIORITY 0617  
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM J2 MIAMI FL PRIORITY  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1029

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 PORT AU PRINCE 002202

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE  
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STATE FOR WHA/EX AND WHA/CAR  
S/CRS  
SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD  
STATE PASS AID FOR LAC/CAR  
INR/IAA (BEN-YEHUDA)  
WHA/EX PLEASEPASS USOAS

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [HA](#) [KCRM](#) [MARR](#)  
SUBJECT: MARTISSANT VIOLENT, BUT NOT "OPERATION BAGHDAD"

REF: PAUP 01214

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¶1. (U) This message is sensitive but unclassified -- protect accordingly.

¶2. (SBU) Summary: Gang violence has increased in the Port-au-Prince neighborhood of Martissant during recent weeks, and local radio has given a forum to gang members who claim they are launching "Operation Baghdad II," referring to the violence emanating from Cite Soleil in late summer of 2004 that paralyzed the capital. MINUSTAH officials believe that the recent violence relates directly to the long-simmering gang warfare in Martissant, and dismiss claims that the incidents are related to a larger Lavalas movement or any other outside forces. MINUSTAH's Sri Lankan military contingent remains stationed in the neighborhood and actively patrols, and civil affairs staff are trying to initiate an integrated community development and violence suppression program. Martissant remains the GoH's and MINUSTAH's second security priority behind Cite Soleil, but the localized nature of the violence notwithstanding, insecurity in Martissant is a growing concern. End Summary.

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Violence Erupts in Martissant  
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¶3. (U) The neighborhood of Martissant on the southern outskirts of Port-au-Prince erupted in violence on Friday, November 3. The activities began early in the morning when gang members set up roadblocks of burning tires, then proceeded to shoot at civilians as well as one police officer who was traveling through the area. The violence resulted in the death of one individual and at least three injuries. The police in the area were unable to contain the violence, and press reports claimed that MINUSTAH troops did not arrive on the scene until late in the day. The Haitian National Police (HNP) arrested approximately a dozen people in association with the violence, one of whom the police claim is a known gang leader.

¶4. (U) HNP and MINUSTAH forces were reportedly patrolling the area starting on Friday evening, although tensions remained

high throughout the weekend and gang members erected more tire roadblocks on Monday morning. The following morning the gang members attacked again, setting up barricades of burning tires and even holding passengers on a local bus hostage for a time. Martissant residents participated in more demonstrations on November 13, blocking the Carrefour road that serves as a major thoroughfare and the connecting point for all of Haiti's "southern claw". The protesters again demanded the release of the prisoners and asked for "dialogue" with the GoH.

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Has Operation Baghdad II Moved to Martissant?  
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15. (U) Gang representatives claiming allegiance to Lavalas have made repeated appearances on local radio shows over the last week threatening further violence in Martissant. A self-proclaimed spokesperson for militant Lavalas partisans made statements on local radio on Friday claiming that the violence in Martissant is part of "Operation Baghdad II" and that the movement aims to create panic and disorder in the area. This follows declarations in July by militant Lavalas supporters that they would launch a second wave of the violent fighting known as "Operation Baghdad" if they were not given back jobs they had held under the Aristide government (ref A). The unidentified speaker reaffirmed the group's readiness to combat police and MINUSTAH forces. The speaker expressed that Friday's violence was just a preview of what the real Operation Baghdad II will be like, and invited other Lavalas militants in the rest of the country to follow their example and mobilize to force President Preval to give their jobs back.

16. (SBU) Poloff traveled to Martissant on November 9 with MINUSTAH Civil Affairs director Jay Carter and Western

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Department coordinator Jean-Philippe Laberge. Laberge noted that two of the Martissant gangs are actually known to be Lavalas rivals, and since Operation Baghdad II is supposed to be a Lavalas movement, the claims that this is the beginning of the operation do not hold water. He also discounted claims that gangs from the more heavily-policed Cite Soleil and Bel Air slums had moved their operations to the less guarded Martissant area.

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Martissant Gang Rivalries Longstanding  
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17. (SBU) According to Laberge, three separate gangs operate in Martissant, whose territories converge at the intersection where most of the recent conflicts have occurred. Although recent radio statements included a claim by a gang member that the rival groups in Martissant have now united to stand up to the GoH, Laberge believed this was an empty threat, and that the gangs are still fighting amongst themselves for control of the area. He estimated that the Martissant gangs have less than 20 members each, compared to hundreds of gang members in Cite Soleil.

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MINUSTAH Presence in Martissant 100 Strong  
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18. (SBU) There is a contingent of approximately 100 Sri Lankan troops permanently stationed in Martissant, and their presence was visible during Poloff's visit to the neighborhood. Poloff inquired of the troops whether the fighting in the area had been unusually bad in the last few days, and one soldier replied that "It's always bad." UN Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) Edmond Mulet made a statement on November 13 that MINUSTAH would do everything possible to prevent the Martissant gangs from carrying out their threats of continued violence and

destruction and reaffirmed the Sri Lankan contingent's dedication to keeping order in the neighborhood.

¶9. (SBU) According to Carter, MINUSTAH has an integrated community development and violence suppression program planned for Martissant. They are currently seeking a building in the center of the neighborhood to serve as headquarters for HNP officers, civil affairs staff and the troops in the area. The plan is to use this base of operations to permanently integrate police into the community and for civil affairs to provide technical assistance to the community. MINUSTAH had originally planned to use the Grand Ravine school building as a headquarters, with the understanding that they would eventually return the building, with improvements, so that it could become an operating school (which it has never been). However, due to protests from the community over the use of the school building, MINUSTAH is actively seeking an alternate location.

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GoH Interior Minister Reaction  
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¶10. (U) Interior Minister Paul Antoine Bien-Aime announced that the GoH is working to control the Martissant zone and will continue their "carrot and stick" method of dealing with the Martissant gangs, with the carrot being dialogue and forceful interventions only being used "when things get out of hand". The GoH's greatest concern is establishing and maintaining security in the area for the December 3 elections, which Bien-Aime asserted the people of Martissant were preparing for despite the violence.

¶11. (SBU) Comment: Long-standing turf battles among the rival gangs in Martissant over the past two years have resulted in two noteworthy massacres, untold other casualties, and the destruction of property. The violence has also interfered with the provision of needed assistance from international organizations. Because the gangs are smaller in number and engaged in internecine violence, rather than targeting MINUSTAH, Martissant has not received the same level of

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attention from Haitian and international authorities as have Cite Soleil and Bel Air. The ongoing violence is worrisome, however, and could divert HNP and MINUSTAH resources currently focused on Cite Soleil. Nonetheless, declarations by the gangs that they are conducting another Operation Baghdad are overblown. They appear more designed to sow fear out of proportion to their capabilities and goad the GoH into negotiating the gang leaders' demands. End Comment.  
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